

**WHY DO I NEED A HIGHLY
MIGRATORY SPECIES (HMS) VESSEL
PERMIT?**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) requires vessel permits for Atlantic HMS (tunas, billfish, swordfish, and sharks) to monitor fishing effort, gain an understanding about fishery participants, distribute regulatory and other information, and collect data for management decisions.

WHO NEEDS A VESSEL PERMIT?
Depending on what HMS you are fishing for, whether you fish commercially or recreationally, and what kind of fishing gear you use, you may need a permit. The types of vessel permits required are:

- Recreational HMS Angling Vessel Permit**
(Tuna, Swordfish, Billfish, Shark)
- HMS Charter/Headboat Vessel Permit**
(Tuna, Swordfish, Billfish, Shark)
- Commercial Vessel Permits:**
 - Tuna (General, Harpoon, Trap Purse Seine Limited Access, Longline Limited Access)
 - Shark Limited Access
(Directed, Incidental)
 - Swordfish Limited Access
(Directed, Incidental, Handgear)

WHERE DO I GET A PERMIT?
No new commercial shark and swordfish limited access permits are being issued by NOAA Fisheries. Transfers and renewals are processed by NOAA Fisheries (1-727-570-5326). Forms can be found at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>. The Atlantic tunas, Atlantic HMS Angling, and Atlantic HMS Charter/Headboat permits are available by calling 1-888-872-8862 or by logging onto www.nmfspermits.com.

HMS ANGLING PERMIT

- Owners of vessels used to fish recreationally (*i.e.*, no sale of fish) for HMS are required to obtain an HMS Angling permit from NOAA Fisheries.
- Recreational fishermen may not sell, barter, or trade Atlantic HMS when fishing with an HMS Angling permit.
- Recreational bag limits and reporting requirements may apply.
- For North Atlantic swordfish, billfish, and sharks, this permit requirement only applies when fishing in Federal waters, although state regulations may also apply.
- For regulated tuna species (bluefin, bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack), this permit requirement applies in Federal and state waters.
- HMS Angling Category Authorized gears:*
Tuna: Rod and reel (includes downriggers), handline; *Billfish:* Rod and reel; *Swordfish:* Rod and reel, handline; *Shark:* Handgear (rod and reel (includes downriggers), handline, harpoon, and bandit gear).

TUNA COMMERCIAL PERMITS

- Atlantic tunas (bluefin, bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack) may be sold only by fishermen permitted in commercial categories and only to permitted dealers.
- Only one permit category may be assigned to a vessel. Vessels issued a tuna commercial permit may not obtain an HMS Charter/Headboat or HMS Angling permit.
- Authorized gears for a particular category apply only to bluefin tuna fishing. Bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack tuna may be taken with any authorized gear for tunas, except that purse seine and longline gear is restricted for use by vessels with limited access permits.
- Retention limits and reporting requirements

vary by permit type.

General Category: Vessel owners who use handgear to harvest Atlantic tunas, including large medium and giant bluefin tuna, and sell the fish must obtain a General category permit. Vessels issued a General category permit may not retain swordfish, shark, or billfish recreationally. *Authorized gear: Handgear.*

Harpoon Category: Vessel owners who use participate in the commercial harpoon fishery for Atlantic tunas, including large medium and giant bluefin tuna, must obtain a Harpoon category permit. *Authorized gear: Harpoon.*

Trap Category: Vessel owners who participate in trap fisheries that may result in the incidental taking of large medium and giant bluefin tuna must obtain a Trap category permit. *Authorized gear: Pound net, fish weir.*

Purse Seine Category-- Limited Access: Vessel owners who participate in the commercial purse seine fishery for Atlantic tunas, including bluefin tuna, must obtain a Purse Seine category permit. Because the tuna purse seine fishery is limited access, you cannot obtain a new permit from NOAA Fisheries. However, NOAA Fisheries processes permit transfers. *Authorized gear: Purse Seine.*

Longline Category -- Limited Access: Vessel owners who participate in commercial longline fisheries for Atlantic tunas, including the incidental take of large medium and giant bluefin tuna, must obtain a Longline category permit. *A Longline category permit is only valid when held in combination with a Directed or Incidental Swordfish Limited Access Permit and a Shark Limited Access*

Permit. Because the tuna longline fishery is limited access, you cannot obtain a new permit from NOAA Fisheries. However, NOAA Fisheries processes permit transfers. *Authorized Gear: Longline.*

SHARK COMMERCIAL PERMITS

- Atlantic sharks may be sold only by fishermen permitted in commercial categories and only to permitted dealers.
- Reporting and other requirements apply.
- Because the commercial shark fisheries are limited access, you cannot obtain a new permit from NOAA Fisheries. However, NOAA Fisheries processes permit renewals and transfers.
- Vessel upgrading restrictions apply to directed shark permit transfers.

Directed Shark Limited Access Permit: Vessel owners issued directed shark permits cannot retain, possess, or land more than 4,000 lbs dressed weight of large coastal sharks per trip. No commercial retention limits apply to small coastal or pelagic sharks. *Authorized gear: Longline, gillnet, handgear*

Incidental Shark Limited Access Permit: Vessel owners issued incidental shark permits cannot retain, possess, or land more than 5 large coastal sharks, and 16 small coastal and pelagic sharks, combined, per trip. *Authorized gear: Longline, gillnet, handgear.*

Shark Limited Access Permit Condition: A vessel owner issued a shark permit must agree, as a condition of the permit, that the vessel's shark fishing, catch, and gear are subject to the Federal shark regulations regardless of where the vessel is fishing or where the shark or gear are possessed, taken, or landed.

SWORDFISH COMMERCIAL PERMITS

- Atlantic swordfish may be sold only by fishermen permitted in commercial categories and only to permitted dealers.
- *A Directed or Incidental Swordfish Limited Access Permit is only valid when held in combination with a Tuna Longline Category Permit and a Shark Limited Access Permit.*
- Reporting and other requirements apply.
- Because the commercial swordfish fisheries are limited access, you cannot obtain a new permit from NOAA Fisheries. However, NOAA Fisheries processes permit renewals and transfers.
- Vessel upgrading restrictions apply to directed and handgear permit transfers.

Directed Swordfish Limited Access Permit: When the directed fishery is open, no commercial swordfish retention limits apply to vessel owners issued a directed swordfish permit. If the directed fishery is open, incidental catch limits apply. *Authorized gear: Longline, handgear.*

Incidental Swordfish Limited Access Permit: Vessel owners issued an incidental swordfish permit cannot retain, possess or land more than 2 swordfish per trip, except for vessels using squid trawl gear which may retain up to 5 swordfish per trip. *Authorized gear: Longline and handgear.*

Swordfish Handgear Limited Access Permit: When the directed fishery is open, no commercial swordfish retention limits apply to vessel owners issued a swordfish handgear permit. When the directed fishery is closed, no swordfish may be retained. *Authorized gear: Handgear.*

Swordfish Limited Access Permit Condition: An owner issued a swordfish permit must agree, as a condition of the permit, that the vessel’s swordfish fishing, catch, and gear are subject to the Federal swordfish regulations regardless of where the vessel is fishing or where the swordfish or gear are possessed, taken, or landed.

HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT PERMITS

- Owners of vessels that carry passengers for hire and fish for Atlantic HMS must obtain an annual HMS Charter/headboat permit.
- Vessel owners may sell tunas; shark and swordfish can only be sold if commercial shark and swordfish permits have also been issued to the vessel.
- Reporting and other requirements apply.
- *Authorized gear: Rod and reel (including downriggers), bandit gear, handline.*

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hmspg.html
www.nmfspermits.com
1-888-872-8862 (HMS Permits)
1-800-894-5528 (General HMS Info Line)

Tuna Issues
HMS Gloucester 978-281-9260
Shark, Swordfish, & Permitting Issues
HMS Headquarters 301-713-2347
Recreational Swordfish & Billfish Issues
HMS St. Petersburg 727-570-5447
Shark & Swordfish Commercial Permit Renewals & Transfers Southeast Regional Permit Office
727-570-5326

National Marine Fisheries Service
Highly Migratory Species Management Div.
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Vessel Permit Requirements



NOAA Fisheries
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
Highly Migratory Species Management Division

This pamphlet provides a summary of HMS permit regulations, as of May 2003. A copy of complete fishery regulations that apply to HMS fishermen may be found at 50 CFR part 635 or obtained by calling the Highly Migratory Species Management Division at 301-713-2347. Since fishery rules are subject to change, fishermen must familiarize themselves with the latest complete regulations and are responsible for complying with current official regulations.